

**MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 3, 2003**

Chief Darrel Fournier called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:02pm at the Maine Emergency Medical Services conference room, Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Jack Berry, Jay Bradshaw, John Cannon, John Dean, Darrel Fournier, Albert Godfrey, Edward Johnston, Geoffrey Maker, Harty Norris, Chief Jethro Pease, David Wacker, Leslie Wiles, and Steve Willis. Members absent included Michael Albert, Representative Thomas Bull, Chief Jeffrey Cammack, Representative Robert Duplessie, Randy Keep and Susan Pinette (staff). Art Cleaves, Director of the Maine Emergency Management Agency attended as guest of the Fire Commission.

The first item of business was adoption of the February minutes. A typo was noted (page 1- had should be has). Staff will correct the minutes.

A motion by Al Godfrey, seconded by Darrel Fournier, to accept the amended minutes of February 3, 2003. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Bylaws: The Bylaws Committee met to update the Fire Commission's current bylaws and distributed a draft (attached) of their recommended changes. It was noted that the bylaws would need to be amended once the Legislature passed L.D. 1160, the Fire Commission's legislation increasing the Fire Commission membership by adding representatives from the Maine Emergency Medical Services and the Maine Emergency Management Agency. Discussion of item #1 of the draft included whether the Fire Commission should change "health care bridge" to "health care program". Members agreed retain the original language. The consensus of members on item #4 was to go with an annual election of officers. Item #9's discussion was lively. Agreement was reached on all items as amended.

OLD BUSINESS

Fire Commission members heard from members who attended the retirement dinner for Senator William O'Gara, former chair of the Fire Commission, that the event was very well attended. The Fire Commission presented Senator O'Gara with a white helmet and shield. Members discussed noting the event on the Fire Commission's website and Steve Willis and Darrel Fournier volunteered to draft an article.

Members were reminded that the Fire Commission's Legislative Reception at the Ground Round Restaurant would be held on Tuesday, March 11th from 4-8pm. Invitations have been sent to legislators and Representative Tom Bull and Senator Beth Edmonds agreed to make announcements to their respective legislative houses. The organizations sponsoring the reception include the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters, the Maine Fire Chiefs Association and Maine Fire Education and Training.

A draft of the "Best Practices Award" nomination process and criteria was emailed to members. Members discussed their reasons and expectations about the award and agreed on the attached rules and nomination form. The Fire Commission's website will be updated with the approved forms. Members suggested the Public Safety Information Officer be asked to do a press release on "Best Practice Award" recipients.

A motion by Ted Johnston, seconded by Al Godfrey, to accept the "Best Practices Award" draft as amended and to post these amended forms on the Fire Commission's website. The motion passes unanimously.

Fire Commission members had a lengthy discussion regarding the ongoing legislative session and proposed legislation. The Fire Commission has proposed legislation that will increase commission membership by two positions- the director or designee of the Maine Emergency Medical Services and the Director or designee of the Maine Emergency Management Agency. The legislation also proposes that the legislative representatives be chosen from the entire Senate or House of Representatives, rather than limited to only one committee. The Fire Commission has three legislative vacancies- two from the Senate and one from the House of Representatives.

Members learned the Fire Alarm bill has been rewritten and forwarded for contractor input. Other bills of interest to the Fire Commission include one involving lights and sirens for volunteer firefighters and another bill allows blue lights on the back of fire apparatus. The Maine State Police opposed the "blue light" bill at the legislative hearing. A study by the California State Police indicated that a combination of lights might actually be safer. Other studies have shown different colors and weather conditions are factors to be considered. The Transportation Committee has referred the light and sirens bills (LD 111 and LD 493) to the Fire Commission to study the issue and submit a report by January 2004.

Fire Commission members discussed the recent meeting with representatives of Senator Collins and Representative Tom Allen. All attending agreed it was an informative meeting on both sides and it was important to continue the dialogue with the federal delegation. One issue was military surplus equipment and the difficulty of obtaining this equipment for use by local fire departments. The Congressional representatives were interested to learn about the problems in the local departments. Members expressed the need to keep the lines of communication open.

A motion by Steve Willis, seconded by Jack Berry, to invite the federal delegation and/or their representatives to meet on a quarterly basis with the Fire Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members were updated on the recent state budget cuts and their effect on the various departments. Members were told that in some instances departments lost personnel and others had to cut programs. Most of the budget cuts were straight percentage cuts although that could change as the Legislature attempted to balance the state budget. Members were warned to be aware of what was happening and that the Fire Commission may be asked to take a position in the future. Some members wanted the Fire Commission to take a more active leadership role regarding the budget, while others expressed caution and the need to get all the facts.

A motion by Jack Berry, seconded by Dave Wacker, to send a letter to Public Safety Commissioner Cantara and request an accounting of where the E911 surcharge funds are currently going. The motion passed with members Jay Bradshaw and John Dean abstaining.

Fire Commission members next discussed the ongoing problem of the need to find a permanent funding source for the SFMO and MFT&E. Members spoke of the uncertainty of the funding and suggested a meeting between insurance representatives, legislators and Fire Commission members to talk about these issues and try to resolve this problem. John Dean and Steve Willis were asked to organize this meeting.

A motion by Harty Norris, seconded by Jeff Maker, to host a breakfast or meeting and invite insurance representatives and legislators to join the Fire Commission to discuss and find a solution to the funding issues of the SFMO and MFT&E. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members agreed to appoint a nominations committee to select candidates for the four officer positions prior to the April meeting.

Members agreed on the following meeting schedule:

Monday, April 7th

Monday, May 5th

Meetings are tentatively scheduled for the MEMS conference room but may be moved to the State House to accommodate the legislative schedule. Staff will keep members informed.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Fournier adjourned the meeting at 3:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M.Pinette

